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Housekeepers' Chat Friday, March 2, 1928.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "What Bobbie Learns at Nursery School." Program based on article in The Cornell Countryman, January, 1926, by Nellie L. Perkins, Child Training Department, College of Home Economics, Cornell University. Menus from Vassar College Nursery School. Programs approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. ------

NOTE: Monday's talk will be a popular treatment of "My Kitchen Garden".

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Bobby is three years old. His mother works in an office all day, and Bobby goes to nursery school. His classmates range in age from two to four years. Bobby and his little freinds are learning a great many things about the world they live in. The are being encouraged to experiment, to work things out for themselves, so that they will become independent and self-reliant boys and girls.

Perhaps you have seen a model nursery school, like Bobby's. All the furniture and equipment are planned especially for short legs and arms. In the bathroom are ten-inch toilets and 18-inch wash bowls, just the right height for Bobbie and his friends. Most of the children look after themselves, without help from grown-ups. It's fun to be independent, if every other youngster is trying things alone, and refusing help. Even the tiny toddlers try to keep up with the procession.

Each child has a small locker, with a shelf for special treasures, a place for a cap or hood, a special hook for coat and muffler, another hook for extras, and a place for rubbers and galoshes. Perhaps you are wondering how the very youngest children recognize their lockers. That's easy. Each locker bears a large red tag, with a bright and colorful picture from Mother Goose, perhaps, or a drum with drumsticks, or one of the Three Bears. Similar tags are also used on such equipment as blankets, cots, towels, and wash cloths.

Another modern nursery school uses printed names, instead of pictures. Even a youngster who cannot read, can get a mental picture of what his name looks like, when printed.

Three-year-old Bobby and his friends are developing a sense of responsibility. They dust the chairs and tables, pile up the blocks in a special corner, set the tables, wash the dishes, and water the flowers. None of this work is drudgery but rather a jolly game, where laughter and chatter do not interfere with concentration.

R-HC. 3/2/28.

Miss Nellie Perkins of Cornell University, who wrote the article on which I'm basing this talk, says that perseverance and some dexterity are required in performing the tasks I've mentioned, but "there is an opportunity for running and skipping, and the whole situation lends itself to rivalry in accomplishment, with the encouragement and approval of sympathetic teachers, who appreciate little people's ambitions, and at the same time their difficulties, which grow out of short legs and arms that get tired so quickly . . . .

"Accidents happen, naturally but they are not allowed to seem unduly important. Unnecessary accidents are ruled out by the selection of durable, well made furniture, china, and toys. Of course, even with these precautions, accidents will happen. Even grown-ups make stupid mistakes sometimes, although some of us seem to forget our own mistakes, when dealing with children. An accident in Bobby's nursery school is treated exactly as it would be treated if a grown-up were responsible -- by repairing the damage done, and getting things in order. A broken block is mended, sticky hands and mouth are washed, spilled paints are wiped up, broken glass or china is swept up, and put in the ash can. To help in the cleaning up there are tiny buckets, dust pans, brushes, and small soft scrub cloths. One of Bobby's three-year-old friends found the cleaning process so interesting that he spilled his dessert regularly for several days, before his teacher discovered what he was up to.

There are only two rules in Bobby's school, and these were never definitely formulated for the children. The first rule is that everything must be put back in its place, when no longer in use. The second rule is that every task must be completed. If the child has chosen a task which is too big for him, he gets help, before he is tired out, but he is unconscious of the help. This is one of the places, says Miss Perkins, where parents need good judgment. The tendency, as every fond mother knows, is to help too much, and thus rob the child of the thing in the experiment which has most value to him, or, on the other hand, to leave him to something which is too big. If the child attempts a job which is too big, he may grow so discouraged that he will never attempt it again, for fear of failing.

You may be interested in Bobby's playthings. Expensive and complicated toys are not popular. The most appreciated toys in this nursery school are large building blocks, wagons, and old pots and pans -- with their possibilities for village houses, stores, and fire engines which require officers, policemen, and firemen. These toys give every youngster in the group a chance to do something important. Two-year-olds are not so much interested in joining these large groups, but they imitate on the side, in corners, and out of the way places, with tiny stoves, toy dishes, and a doll buggy. The boys are as interested in doll carriages as are the girls, although, instead of taking dolls for a ride, the boys often substitute balls, blocks, or toy animals.

I must mention meal time at the nursery. With a mid-morning and afternoon feeding, and a regular lunch at noon -- there is plenty of oppor-

tunity to study the children's food habits. At meal time, Bobby sits at a small table, with two other children and a teacher. They're a sociable, well-mannered little group, and they come to the table happy after the morning's work and play. The teacher is more of an umpire than a coach, for the children look after each other, and try to set examples, or outdo the babies. If you were on the sidelines, at meal time, you might hear such comments as these from the children: "Tiny bites, baby," "Drink your milk slowly," and "Don't you know you can't have dessert if you don't eat your dinner?" Such remarks, from the children, are of much more weight in persuading a child to eat than are the coaxing irritation, or the solicitude, of a grown-up. Bobby doesn't have to be coaxed to eat all the food on his plate. No indeed, he wants to see the pretty basket of flowers, painted on the plate.

After lunch, there is a long afternoon nap. No child balks at his nap. He puts on pretty felt slippers, climbs upstairs, and finds his own cot, with its bright colored blanket.

After the nap comes a glass of milk. Then the children put on their shoes, coats, and hats, and are ready for the bus which takes them home. There is always the final search for the day's treasures, to take home to mother and father.

While the children are growing and playing and working, they are being studied and observed by their teachers-- girl students who are interested in child development and parent training. The children, all unconscious of their part in the scheme of things, are teaching these girls a great deal which can be put into practice when they have homes and children of their own.

I have with me this morning a week's list of menus, planned a few weeks ago for the children in an eastern nursery school. You may write them, if you wish, as I read:

Monday: Liver Loaf; Mashed Potatoes; Scalloped Tomatoes; Lettuce Sandwiches; Brown Betty.

Tuesday: Sweet Potatoes; Spinach; Buttered Toast; Baked Custard.

Wednesday: Scrambled Eggs; Creamed Onions; Buttered Toast; Apple Tapioca.

Thursday: Tomato Soup; Baked Potato; Apple Sandwiches; Apricots with Custard Sauce.

Friday: Buttered Carrots and Peas; Creamed Salmon; Apricot Sandwiches; Fruit Cup of Oranges and Bananas.

Pretty good menus, aren't they?

Please note that next Monday's program will not be about housecleaning, as scheduled, but about kitchen gardens. My friend W.R.B., has given me some excellent advice on preparing kitchen gardens, and I want to broadcast it, before it's too late.

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